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## Poliovirus Vaccine

I AM FREQUENTLY ASKED ABOUT POLIOVIRUS VACCINE for adults—which one to use. This would be given primarily to travelers or to people who are in high-risk occupations. The health care worker is always listed as being in a high-risk occupation and yet, in fact, I know of no instance where polio has occurred in a health care worker in this country, even in the days when there was no vaccine and a lot of polio.

At any rate, we do recommend poliovirus vaccine for adults. And if your patient is unimmunized or is uncertain, which is the usual scenario, then we do recommend the parenteral vaccine IPV, or Sabin vaccine, if you like. That is given, ideally, at 0, 1 to 2 months, 3 to 4 months, and 12 months. Now, what happens to me is that I have a patient come in and say "I'm going to Thailand, Malaysia, Tibet, and another country I have not heard of, and I'm leaving in three days. What should I do?" Unfortunately, that 12-month scenario, for someone who has never been immunized, is not possible, and then you're left with a very unpleasant choice. If this person has been previously immunized, has had at least three doses of any polio vaccine, even if they're not sure which one, then you can go right ahead with a booster dose of oral polio vaccine. That's only required about every ten years—and the "every ten years," I can assure you, is a number that is based on no science at all. I was on the committee that decided that that sounded right. We didn't have any data and we still don't have any data, but that's the current recommendation.

If, however, your traveler has not been immunized, or isn't at all sure whether they've ever been immunized, and is leaving fairly soon, so you don't think you can get at least two IPV's in, that is, leaving within two months of when they come to see you, which is my usual experience, then you might wish to consider oral polio vaccine simply because for a single dose, a larger proportion of travelers will be immunized.

—ELIZABETH BARRETT-CONNOR, MD

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